

SATURDAY, NOV. 18, 1871.

Subject: Relations of Physical Causes to Spiritual States.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

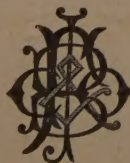
A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



New-York:

J. B. FORD & CO., No. 27 PARK PLACE,

1871.

AMERICAN NEWS COMPANY, AGENTS FOR THE TRADE.

European Agents, SAMPSON LOW, SON, & MARSTON, Crown Buildings, 188 Fleet Street, London.

Sold by all Carriers and News Dealers.

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Brooklyn, January, 1869.

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RELATIONS OF PHYSICAL CAUSES TO SPIRITUAL STATES.

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."—MATT. XXVI. 41.

There is here a direct contrast made between the human body and the human soul. It is more than an intimation that the welfare of the one is continually interfered with by the prevalence of the other; that, in other words, true and noble manhood in the spirit is dependent largely for its hindrances or its helps upon the body in which we dwell.

We are commanded to watch. It would seem as if that were a command which extends over all our physical conditions. And when we are commanded, it would seem as though the command entered into the great moral realm, and had special reference to those things which belong to our upper and higher nature. Both things are indispensable to a true progress in the Christian life—namely, that we should set watch for all the causes of hindrance which belong to us as organized bodily creatures; and that we should also partake of that divine and spiritual succor or help which we have, according to the promises of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by the Holy Ghost.

From this passage, last Sunday morning, we spoke of the two sources of influence from which men derive help—namely, the lower and the higher. Spiritual help is the theme of ordinary discourse from the pulpit. Men are instructed to seek for the divine help when they are in need. From the nature of things, this is, and always must be, of transcendent importance. But on that very account, perhaps, men have a disproportionate amount of instruction in that sphere which faith and prayer occupy. For a variety of reasons men have, if anywhere, been left uninstructed in regard to those elements of Christian life which depend upon man's physical economy. The relation of one's moral state to his physical condition has not been so

generally taught as, with profit, it might have been. Better views, however, are dawning. Better instruction is gradually gaining ground. We may hope, as the result, by and by, not only that the battle of life will be more skillfully and surely fought, but that there will a better system of instruction, and that manhood itself will become larger, more symmetrical, richer, and more sure, in regard to a great proportion of the community.

I shall continue, to-day, to point out the relations which physical causes sustain to spiritual states; not, however, for the sake of opening a thoroughfare of excuses and of palliations (for men love to throw their short-comings upon their organization and their nature), but to enable those who honestly desire to live a Christian and manly life, to remove the unsuspected hindrances, and to secure help from directions which are not usually resorted to.

I have already spoken of the right aim which every one must have in order to make any considerable progress in Christian life, and of the necessity for the full occupation of one's powers. It was while discussing this, that our time failed; and there we paused. And I proceed now to speak of those healthy conditions of body which are indispensable to the right development of Christian dispositions and Christian character.

I shall speak of the condition of the body in its relations to the predominance of the lower faculties, to its insusceptibility of the finer emotions, to the experiences which arise from the morbid conditions of the body, and to their effect, particularly on the imagination, which is so indispensable to all the higher forms of religious growth.

First, I must caution you not to confound simple health with virtue or piety. A man may be very vigorous in bone and muscle, full in nerve, and wholesome in all his functions, and yet be very selfish and very proud. Bodily life does not secure all that a man needs for manhood. It is that which must underlie all true processes; but the thing itself is simply a condition by which you obtain, and not the obtaining. Morbid conditions of the body will inevitably insure darkness of mind. They are often the sources of temptations; and many of the sins which men fall into, and which are most harmful to their religious growth, may be said to spring directly from morbid conditions of their bodies.

We are not speaking, now, of absolute sickness; we are speaking of those thousand disproportions, irregularities, and harmful indulgences, which keep the human body out of vigorous health, which fill it with trouble, and which, though they do not prevent the pursuits of ordinary business, do make them heavy. It is possible for

a person so to use his body as never to have it in a right condition, and yet not be in a state which amounts to absolute sickness. It is not necessary that a man should break all the blades of his knife in order to be knifeless. If they be dull, or if the points be broken, its usefulness may be entirely destroyed. It is not necessary that a violin should be absolutely broken in order to be spoiled. If it be stringless, or if the strings be in disproportion, or if they have been so neglected that they will not sound to the bow, it is substantially destroyed for all the purposes for which it was made.

Now, sickness, outright, may be or may not be a benefit; but usually people are not held to account for that. Strictly speaking, I think there are very few men who carry themselves in a perfect state of health. Men are healthy in certain parts, and more or less obstructed and enfeebled in other parts. It is not common to find a really, thoroughly healthy man. I do not mean that there are not men who stand an examination for life insurance, which has regard to length of life; but I am speaking of the free and joyous use by men of all their faculties; as true happiness depends upon their activity in bodily conditions. Few men, from day to day, have an unobstructed, clear and perfect use of themselves. Certain parts of men may be bright, and other parts obscure. Certain parts may be regular, and other parts morbid. The whole play, more or less, of the minds of men is obstructed—and usually from bodily reasons very largely.

An unwholesome condition of the body tends to draw a man's thoughts mainly to himself. It is not possible for one to be in an unhealthy state without becoming an object of his own thought. A true, high, perfect condition of health is one in which man is unconscious of himself and his faculties. It is a condition in which one is like perfect glass, whose perfection consists in its being so transparent that it does not look like glass, nor anything else,—so that it can be seen through without obstruction. Perfect health usually sets a man free from the consciousness of himself. Whatever mars health, whatever dims it, whatever hinders it, whatever produces aches, and annoyances, and irritations, draws a man's thought in upon himself. And it is one of the least profitable of the occupations in which a man can engage, to think of himself in any such way as a valetudinarian thinks of himself. To study the structure of the mind may be beneficial; but what a wretched condition is that man in, who, in a circuit of pleasure, and in the midst of acquaintances, is perpetually thinking of the corn that aches on his foot! Whatever is going on about him, it is himself, in some mean relation, that he is obliged to think of. How many men there

are who, without being positively sick or under a physician's care, are in such a condition of mind that their thoughts are perpetually drawn to their own state, and hang heavily and moodily over their own lives.

There is no such thing as a buoyant Christian experience where a morbid condition of the body is perpetually drawing a man's thoughts away from others, and from the sphere of activity. A man's thoughts are consciously directed upon himself when he has a disordered body. It stirs up irritations, jealousies, and morbid appetites.

It is often supposed that Satan tempts men in these morbid states. Nor do I doubt it. But the instrument by which he usually tempts men is a disordered body. Men with indigestion are almost always tempted of the devil. Men whose nervous system is out of order have any number of fiends tempting them besides the magister. The morbid states of the system have an elective affinity for the basilar instincts and appetites of men; and all the passions are in morbid conditions; and all the lower animal feelings which we have in common with the brute race, are fevered, stirred up, disordered; and out of them come ten thousand mists and temptations. And it is almost impossible for a man who has any such conditions, to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.

No amount of moral or spiritual motive alone will help one whose ailments are physical. We may spiritually assist; we may corroborate; we may complement; but if men are morally tempted; if morally they suffer; if their hopes are partial; if their fears are many; if their faith is small; if their trust is little; if their consciences are burdened; if it is dark to them; if they are discouraged and desponding, it is quite in vain for them to attempt to lift the burden by the simple act of prayer. Not that prayer is invalid; not that prayer is not answered; not that prayer is not normal under certain conditions; but prayer in circumstances of physical unhealth is not sufficient.

Let me specify the methods by which men hinder their moral clarity. First, they do it by diet. I think that either by their ignorance or their immoderation in diet, men contrive to set over against themselves an amount of difficulty which all the prayers they can utter are not a match for. I think that men over-eat their prayers. You would not think that a man who, having, with a sharp instrument cleaved off his fingers, was wise or sensible if, instead of calling for surgical help to bind up the wounds, he should pray that God would put back his fingers where they were. Men are to pray; but they are to watch as well as pray. They are to take care of their

bodily conditions, as well as pray for spiritual states. Both must coöperate and work. Men are to touch the very center of sense; and through that they are to reach all the higher moral emotions.

It is essential, therefore, that care be exercised in regard to the use to which men put their stomachs. It is quite in vain for a man to eat so that he is dyspeptic, and at the same time attempt to live in a state of grace. Over-nutrition, in various ways, in a body strong enough to digest food, is perpetually producing an abnormal state of the blood, and carrying things to immoderation, exciting the passions, and filling the body full of feverish conditions. There are many persons who are believed to be children of grace, but who make it a point, once a day, at any rate, to eat themselves into a fair condition of stupidity. Do you suppose a man who spends the whole day in business, plethoric, over-bloated, almost obese from constant feeding, and who, when the blessed hour at last comes that he can lay aside the duties of the office or the store, goes home to his hour or hour and a half of gourmandizing, eating till he can scarcely see, purple with blood, somnolent all the evening, and snoring himself, at last, through his devotions, to his bed, and does this every day—do you suppose such a man can grow in grace? or do you suppose that out of such habits as his can come the fruits of the Spirit of God? Do you recollect what the fruits of the Spirit are? It may be worth while for us to carry these along in our memory, as we proceed. They are recorded in Galatians:

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”

Now, how can these, which are really the fruits of the higher faculties, and in their most wholesome conditions, exist, or even be known, where there is gluttonous stuffing?

But there are many persons that are not *bon vivants*, who habitually over-eat without knowing it; who follow their appetite, and are caught by it as a man is caught in the race-way of a mill. They eat till they are full, and more than full. They eat beyond the power of wholesome digestion. They eat beyond the want of supply in their system. They eat with an eagerness, with a rashness, with an ignorance, that every day lowers the tone of their health, and every day obscures the clarity of their mind. They are obliged to work up against their own blood. It is back-water on the wheel. There is many and many a man who is a good man as the world goes, who is temperate in many respects, and who gets along very well so far as the government of his passions is concerned; but who, after all, keeps himself in a low mental condition all the time by over-eating.

On the other hand, there are many men who, in this condition, have discovered their mistake, and recognized the evil of it, and corrected it, and cleared off continents of trouble, and facilitated every process of life, returning sweetness to their dispositions that before were acrid, simply by a judicious diet.

Now, in this respect, it takes three men to make a Christian—first, the principal, the man himself; second his doctor; and third, his minister. And it seems to me that one of the most important elements that could be secured, would be the putting the man into possession of an exact knowledge of what his system needs. Because what one man needs another does not need. Too little for you is too much for me, it may be. The want of physiological knowledge is such, among people, that it is not surprising that in many instances they mistake, or do not know. But it is very desirable that a man should know how much he needs, and on what principle he eats, and for what purpose he eats.

I find many who are extremely abstemious; and I say to them, "You suffer from under nutrition. You are naturally slim; you make blood imperfectly; it is not rich; you are white, and long, and thin, and cold; you tend to asceticism; and you are forever afraid of that which is without the least temptation to you—namely, over-indulgence of the animal. You need more animal. You are too heavy for the beast you ride." Under such circumstances, more, and not less, would be a benefit.

On the other hand, there are many men who are really honest in their endeavors to be right and to do right, but who have so much to contend with that they fail. There are men who ought not to eat flesh oftener than once a month. There are men who are over-stimulated all the time. There are men who, if they would abridge their diet, and change the nature of it, leaving off stimulations and meats, would find that almost all their difficulties and temptations would go away.

Under-nutrition, or over-nutrition, is the cause of a thousand envies, a thousand jealousies, a thousand aberrations, a thousand obscurations, a thousand difficulties and infelicities. All these things are, after all, but the working out of natural laws as God has infixed them in the human body. These things should be better understood, and more wisely practiced.

I have spoken of the sins which spring from unwise nutrition. There is also a great hindrance to right living and manly conduct in the sins of stimulation. I do not believe, ordinarily speaking, that to stimulate by alcoholic drinks or narcotics of any kind, is wise or safe. I do not believe that men in an ordinary state of health need

these things, or can take them, even slenderly or occasionally, without disturbing the equipoise of their mind, and doing themselves essential damage. I apprehend that a great deal of the trouble of Christians who indulge in the use of stimulants may be traced to this source. It leads to a perversion of the whole state of the nervous system. If a man be addicted to ordinary vinous stimulants, it is not a question whether abstractly he has a right to indulge in them, nor is it an abstract question of benefit or injury : it is a question of nervous moderation, and of clarity, and of piety itself. Not only does the use of alcoholic stimulants obfuscate the mind, but it irritates the system, and keeps it on such an edge that it is subject to incursions of thoughts and feelings which are unwholesome. It affects the whole nervous system in such a way that it is not wise.

That there are persons who are substantially invalids, who have chronic fevers, or something of the kind, and who, under the physician's perscription, may with profit make use of these stimulants, I do not deny. I am not speaking of such cases, I am speaking of persons who are in health. And I do not believe it is right for such persons to make use of alcoholic drinks, and thus render themselves incapable of maintaining their moral sense, or the clarity and facility of their Christian experience.

I have long been of the opinion that if a man is endeavoring to live a Christian life, unless he can persuade himself to renounce stimulants he cannot succeed. I do not mean that the use of stimulants is necessarily in and of itself a sin ; but I believe that it so disturbs the regular operation of the mental economy that men fail to see or feel the truth as they must see and feel it in order to be truly spiritual Christians.

And that which is true in respect to alcoholic drinks, I believe to be true in respect to tobacco. I believe that many and many a man's life is obscured and made useless or wretched by the use of tobacco. I believe that many and many a man smokes himself out of grace, and chews himself out of grace. I believe that many and many a man is a nuisance, not only to himself, but to his guardian angels and his friends, by his addiction to tobacco. And while I would not immeasurably denounce its use, I would say to every Christian man, It is worth your while seriously to consider this matter, it not from a point of benevolence or refined sense, from the still higher point of conscience and morality. It is worth your while to ask whether you do not narcotize yourself so that grace has no fair chance with you.

And that which is true in respect to these special stimulants, I suppose to be true in respect to many others. Medicines are often

of the nature of stimulants. They excite the nervous system. The nervous system is that part of a man by which he thinks and feels; and it is kept out of balance and out of clarity by the use of medicated stimulants. And I do not think that men can be hearty, indomitable, clear-headed, happy Christian men, in the full power of manhood, who are accustomed to deal so foully by their bodies as they do where these stimulants are resorted to, whether the indulgence be from ignorance, or against light and knowledge.

Obscurations which follow excessive nervous exhaustion are such as ought to be studied and appreciated by all who are endeavoring to live a wholesome Christian life. We ought to know that there is in every person the power of generating but a given amount of nervous force; and that if this force be expended, it is all that the man can normally have. If the expenditure is carried forward to any considerable degree afterward by vehement taxation, there invariably will occur a reactionary state.

In the reactionary conditions of men, as the result of over-exhaustion and the excessive use of nervous force, there is a whole realm of casuistry. Who does not know the dark hour which usually follows the gayety and dissipation of great parties? Oh, how different life looks, how different friendship looks, and how different patriotism is, before and after twenty-four hours of excessive taxation! And how real spiritual things are to a man who is wholesome, and is in the full power of health, and is sensitive in every part. We are never so little skeptical as when we are at the very summit and acme of balanced and regulated health. In other words, when we touch the top of our manhood, when we are in our highest and best condition, then we take hold most firmly upon the invisible; and we never are such doubters and such unbelievers as when, having done violence to the economy of our body, we have come into reactionary states. When we are in eclipse by reason of the abuse of ourselves, then we are most tempted to unbelief, to complaints, and to sins.

Frequently when Christian persons have been in a round of excessive enjoyment, and have run through their whole power of resiliency, and have drawn upon the future, and have come by reaction into hours of obscurity or of twilight, they attempt by fasting and prayer to restore the balance of their disturbed nervous system. Fasting is very good in its way, and prayer is very good in its way; but this is not the right spot for them.

If a man has just come in from a campaign, soiled and grimed with the dust of a hundred miles of march, it is all in vain for him to pray that he may be clean. Let him go into the river, or into a

bath, and wash himself. That will make him clean. Prayer will come in better afterward.

When a man is exhausted in nervous force, that is not the time for him to pray, and wonder why God hides himself from him. Recuperate. Rest. Restore the equilibrium. Pray, if you please, on your way up to it; but remember that it is coming back to obedience, to natural law, and restoring your body to a wholesome condition, which is to give you again peace and quiet with yourself and with God.

So it is with men who are excessively taxed in business. There are some men who seem incapable of being "used up," in the familiar language of society. The day has not hours enough to take away all their power of generating strength. And they are fortunate. But there are many persons who cannot bear the pressure of one day without rest and recuperation. And yet they are caught in the whirl and stream of affairs, and are driven to intemperance—not intemperance in food and drink, but intemperance in work. They ransack and exhaust themselves; and then they marvel why the revelations of truth are not clearer to them; why they do not enjoy the society of Christians better; why religious things are not more congenial to them. But it is no more a marvel than that men who are asleep do not hear, or that men who are dead do not speak.

And that which is true of excitements in pleasure and business, is just as true of religious excitement. This is a point which needs, not only a careful, but a full and frank explanation. It is just as possible for a man to be dissipated in religious feeling, as in any other feeling.

So you may exhaust the source of nervous influence that is laid up in your constitution by excessive religious excitement. Excess in that, as in any other direction, is dissipation. Men, by over-addiction to meetings, by those social excitements which are the life and power and joy of religious meetings, by an excess of feeling, out of proportion and out of season, may exhaust their nervous influence, and find themselves in profound darkness, without hope, and without success in prayer to God. But, as they lost their hope while performing their religious duties, they do not dream that it can be possible for them to have been violating a natural law. And yet, a man can go to meeting too much, and sing too much, and pray too much. A man can be too much excited about his soul. If the measure of excitement were the measure of safety, then there would be no danger in this direction; but if it is true—and it is—that too much addiction to the matter of a man's salvation not only fails to ac-

comply with that end, but hinders it, then excessive religious excitement is not wise. All the reactions which come from anxiety, from uncertainty, and from oscillation between hope and fear; all excitations which come from acute sorrow, from bereavements, and from those ten thousand influences of life which exhaust the finer feelings—these are very largely causes of religious deprivation—the want of vivid religious feeling, and the want of real religious enjoyment.

One great mischief arising from states of mind induced in this way, is, that persons attempt to reinstate themselves by rousing themselves up. Thus they oppose a violent resistance to this tendency, and increase the mischief.

If a person has already overacted cerebrally, and if the result is a low and obscure production of thought and feeling, the remedy is not to think or feel. It is to rest; to take relaxation; to turn away from that which has exhausted him. That is the cure. But how many times are persons who, from watching or over-exertion, from visiting from house to house, from going here and there to console and pray with those who are in affliction—how many times are such persons at last exhausted! They themselves think that they are under the temptation of the devil; and they give themselves to prayer and to reading God's word; or they shut themselves up in their closet. And so they heighten the mischief. They exhaust that which is too far gone already. Recuperation requires that they should restore the body, or the nervous system, to its normal condition. And with the restoration of health will be the disappearance of all these temptations, of darkness, of the various mischiefs which seem to perplex the mind.

We must, then, enlarge our conception of true piety. It is not a certain something which a person puts on himself outside of his body. Grace is revealed as a gift of God. It is true that there is a gift of the salvation which is brought to men. It is true that our good is wrought in us. But it is equally true that when God works upon a heart or a soul, he works according to the laws of man whom he has created. The laws of the body and mind and soul are regulated of God; and if we are to have divine help, we must have it in consonance with, in obedience to, those great laws which are laid down in our manhood.

We aim at a perfect man in Christ Jesus, and this demands compliance with all the laws of our body, our mind, our heart and our soul. And no man can be a perfect Christian who is unsymmetrical. No man can abuse his body and soul, and have full play of grace. No man can set at naught the obvious laws of the mind and yet

have clarity of mind, and the fruit of right-thinking. No man can abuse those conditions on which emotion depends, and have sweet and tranquil emotions. No man can set at defiance the law of God, not as written on Sinai or on Calvary, but as written in himself, and yet be at one with God—with the Son and with the Father. The condition is health—health of body, health of soul, health of the whole spiritual realm.

“When we are called to great and absorbing occupations,” men may say, “how is it possible for us to obey these laws? When we are placed in circumstances where we cannot help ourselves; when we are situated so that a great deal is demanded of us, as in times of war, or in peril, or in the conduct of a great business; when we are placed where, like a wheel in a vast machine, we are not at liberty to stop, how shall we live religiously?” I reply that a man in such a case must dedicate his business to the Lord. His business must be his religion. Through that he must pour out his gracious affections. He must accept his business at the hands of God, and make it his sanctuary, and be a Christian as he goes along, and not wait for reactionary hours. Under such circumstances it is quite in vain for him to have devotional periods if he takes the after hours of the day. He must begin the day with prayer, if he would have a clear view of God, of Christ Jesus, and of heavenly things. These must take precedence of all other things. For, when once he is beyond the threshold of his own home, the storm catches him, and he can no longer find pause in which to pray, except that occasionally he may utter an ejaculatory prayer. In the case, therefore, of those who are in the providence of God necessarily intensely occupied, their devotions must precede their work, and their work must be a means of grace, along such paths, and in such occupations, that they shall evince patience and sympathy and kindness and benevolence by their business, and through it.

A vast amount of the temptation by which men suffer is wrought through the body by bad living, and will be resisted by a wise obedience to physical laws. This fact has given rise to a shallow and superficial school of teaching that holds that if men take care of their bodies, everything else will take care of itself. I say, *These things ought ye to have done, but not to have left the other things undone.* Watch for the health of the body; but do not fall into the mistake of supposing that when you have regulated your bodily powers, and brought your whole physical constitution into a healthful and normal condition, you have only to wait for the evolution of manhood. Christian manhood is that for which a man must stand

and labor and suffer. It is an ideal which cannot be approached without more help than inheres in man. We must take care of those bodily conditions out of which spring mischief. We must look after those elements which bring health. We must watch against temptation, and we must lift up our hearts in prayer for the accomplishment of all the fruits of the Spirit—of gentleness, and meekness, and forbearance, and love, and faith, and hope. In order to secure these, we need that divine help which prayer brings to every man who is in a condition to receive it. *Watch and pray. The spirit is willing. The flesh it is that is weak.*

When all these conditions are met, then we may expect Christian experiences to be bright and clear. Until they are met, I not only do not marvel that persons enjoy so little, but I do not believe there is half as much Christian enjoyment as people make believe that there is. We say a great many things because we have become used to saying them. I hear men in meetings give their experience, and tell how happy they are; but I do not believe they are so happy as they claim to be. I look into their lives, and do not see evidence of as much joy as they tell of having. But I can understand the amiable weakness which leads many men to lay claim to more happiness than they really experience. They feel that they are praising the grace of God when they say that it makes them happy. Men tell how joy came to their souls when they were converted. I do not doubt that. Some say that it has never left them. I suppose this is true of some. Some are very fortunate in this respect. They are elected to it in their very birth, they inherit such health and such balanced organizations. The virtue and piety of twenty generations have come down to them. They came into life with a priceless portion. And they are very happy, I doubt not. But taking people as I see them in life, they are not all, or nearly all, happy in consequence of religion. I think, on the other hand, that not half of our capacity for happiness is met.

I am not speaking of that imaginative happiness of which we are susceptible in a higher state of existence. I am making a lower estimate—one which does not transcend the possibilities of the realm in which we are living. And I say that a Christian man is one out of whom music should be wrung. But most Christians are like an old piano, whose works are very rusty, some of whose strings are broken, and from which many of the trackers are gone. "But," you may say, "this is an instrument so far as the shape is concerned; so far as the sounding-board is concerned; so far as all the screws are concerned." Yes; but it is in such a condition that not

even Beethoven could bring melody out of it. For it is necessary that there should be more than a master: there must be an instrument that has some adaptation to the use to which it is to be applied. If the bass strings are broken, or the tenor strings are broken, or the treble strings are broken; if it gives forth a tinny sound; if it is racked, or disjointed, or out of sorts, it is a very poor instrument.

Yet, even such an instrument may be brought into such a condition that music can be evolved from it. From those old spinets which have come down from our great great grandfathers, if taken and dusted, and repaired and restrung, and brought up to tune, and then manipulated by the hands of skill—even from those old rack-o'-bones might be brought out something worth one's hearing. And on poor, old, feeble, miserable men, if grace puts them in order, tunes may be played that are worth hearing.

But if it be some grand instrument—an instrument that is created by a man of genius (and it takes a genius to make an instrument that a genius can play on); and if it is handled by a musician who is worthy of it, how different is the music which is produced from that which comes from an instrument which has lost its tone by misuse, or by disuse, which is misuse. And how different when grace brings men into tune again, or, to drop the figure, when all their faculties come into harmony and unison, will be the fruits which are wrought out in their lives, from the fruits wrought out in the lives of men whose faculties are in a perpetual state of discord.

The soul of man was meant to be full of power and joy. There is nothing that is so wonderfully created as the human soul. There is in it the outlook of eternity. There is something of God in it. There are echoes in it of the far-off land. We are infinite in the future, though we are finite in the past; and we reach on and on toward the things that are to come; and there is the prophecy of them in many already.

My mocking-bird has been moulting, and he lost his song; but he is beginning to whisper it over again to himself. He is making here and there a scattered note. And that is the prophecy of the full-swellling song by another month, if the bird has proper care, and is rightly fed. I hear the full voice in every one of these tinkling warblers.

So the human soul that has lost its voice, and is moulting in the lower sphere, is beginning to come to it again, as we see by its joys and aspirations.

"It doth yet appear what we shall be."

Yes, it does, in spots. The whole of it does not, but something of it does.

Wonderful creatures men are—for littleness; for meanness; for dirtiness. Wonderful they are for wickedness, for deceitfulness, for cruelty. Wonderful they are for sordidness, for avarice. Wonderful they are for self-destruction. But more wonderful are men for the vanquishing power of faith, for the all-conquering power of hope, for the power of flight by thought, for aspiration, for yearning, for love, and for joys that make heaven shine as the firmament at night with all the stars in it. Wonderful are men; and yet, how few know how to take care of themselves, so that they are healthy in body—in heart, in stomach, in liver, in brain, in every limb, and in each faculty! How few are in all parts of their constitution in a state of health, sublime and sanctified by the divine spirit of God! How few know what is the reward of obedience to, and the penalty of violating, the laws of their being! How few walk with God, and live in that perfect peace which passes all understanding, because they live in conformity to the divine decrees which govern human creatures!

Listen to Paul's prayer:

"The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Is there any other gift that you could present to Christ at his coming that would be so worthy of his taking, and that would fill him with such joy, and you with such blessedness, as yourself, sanctified in body and spirit and soul, and trained to all excellences, and aspiring evermore, so that at last, as a son of God, you should stand unrebuked in the presence of the Eternal Father?

Men and brethren, ponder these things. See if your houses may not be made more nearly like the temple of God. See if your habits at home, elsewhere than in the closet, do not need improvement. See if your table does not call for reformation. See if your whole life is not in spots blameworthy. If you would live a Christian life, live holily, obediently, remembering that God is revealed by everything in you and about you as plainly as he was revealed on Mount Sinai. And remember that you are to be joyful by obeying the whole will of God.

On a long and toilsome journey, is there anything that breaks the tedium more than to stop at the house of an old friend, and renew your youth again, by talking over old experiences? How better than food is the heart of man to man! We are now on the toilsome journey of life; and it pleases our dearest Friend and Sa-

viour to appear in the breaking of bread to those who are on the way. We sit down together. We sup. We talk of our old hopes, of our strifes and struggles, and of all the way that is before us. And it is full of sweet refreshment. The blessing of God rests upon our communion together around the broken bread and the out-poured cup. There is Christ in them if there is Christ in us—if we have the divine art of realizing his presence.

So, pilgrims; ye that are weary; ye to whom the way has been too great, I invite you to come and rest. Come and sit down with us around the table of your Lord and Master. That you are sinful, is the reason why you should come. That you have failed in the past, is the reason why you should have strength for the future. That you do not live right, is the reason why you should prepare for a new departure. I do not invite members of the church to come. A man may be out of the church and be eminently fit. You are to stand on your conscious need. If you are weak, if you are sinful, if you are perpetually falling; but if you have the testimony of your conscience that you do not desire to live a life of sin, that you would rather live a life of holiness, and are willing to accept it at the hands of your crucified Redeemer, by that inward experience I invite you to stop at your Master's house, at this most blessed inn on the way of life. Stop, wayfarers, when the Master sits to entertain you. Remain and commune with us for one half-hour. Brothers and sisters in the Lord, as many of you as can tarry with us and partake of the symbols of the body and blood of our Saviour, are affectionately invited to do so.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We rejoice in the richness and the abundance of thy grace, O Lord our God, that art our Father. We rejoice that thy thoughts are not mean, nor poor. Giving doth not impoverish thee, nor withholding make thee rich. It is thy life to give life, and it is thy joy to impart joy. Thou art God over all, blessed forever, because forever thou art blessing. And all thy creatures, widely outlying, are before thee evermore. And though there is sadness, and sorrow, and pain, and darkness, and death, they are not to thee as they are to us. For across the transient, and far into the sure and glowing future, thou art evermore looking; and thou dost behold the light that is shining for all others; and the joy that is waiting for all sorrow, and the victory that lies beyond all defeat, and that consummation which shall build up all the wrecks and losses of this mortal sphere, we cannot rise up into sympathy with. Thou sittest on the circle of the earth, and art above the storm. We are beneath it, and it beats down mainly upon us. And how can we see thee, hidden as thou art, often, by the clouds that surround thy throne? Yet, we rise. As birds through the wind and through the storm seek their shelter, and find it, though drenched, so we seek thee, and in our trouble and disquiet cry out. We are whirled much, and often we fare hardly; but when we find thee we have peace—that peace which passeth all understanding.

Thou art better than men can be, and purer, and wiser, and infinitely more gentle, more loving, and more forgiving. Thou hast received into the bosom of thy confidence those whom men reject. Thou dost understand perfectly those who cannot understand themselves, and are not understood. Thou dost make up out of the fullness of thine own abundance all the imperfections and all the inequalities of this life to us. And so thou art all in all to men—everything that they need—if they will but participate in thy bounty.

O, behold how poor we are! Even as at night children who cannot find their father's house lie down and perish in the cold though it be scarcely beyond their sight, so many are perishing for lack of heavenly shelter, spiritual food, and divine power. Thou art clothing the earth with beauty; and yet how few behold! Having eyes, they see not. Thou art filling the air and time with sounds of sweetness, and all of human life gushes forth with melodies to those who have an ear to hear; and yet how few hear! The hoarse sounds of life—these we hear.

O Lord our God, grant that we may be so tempered by thy Spirit that we shall discern the things that are true though invisible. May we pierce within the shell. May we know the great substantial realm of those everlasting verities that have no body, but that move with infinite power and love forever because they are of God. May we dwell in this realm forever, seeing Him who is invisible, and feeling the power, and the pulsations of those truths which are the food of the soul. And grant from day to day that we may not wander as strangers, and pilgrims, and outcasts, and orphans: may we feel that we have a Father in heaven, and that his providence is for us. May we, in the midst of our conscious imperfections, and mistakes, and frequent stumblings, and great sins, and manifold guilt, have faith still to claim the promise of God, which is not made for the pure in heart alone, but for all that need.

May there this morning be those in thy presence who shall be bold to take hold of God because they so utterly need him. If there are those who are conscious of their failings, who see the rottenness of their dispositions, who have rolled and stumbled in riotous living, grant that they may not cast themselves utterly away. May they, too, feel that there is a portion for

them, and that the heart of God is ever open, and forever calls them to return from their evil, and to learn good. And may they believe that God's grace will help them, and will never leave nor forsake them. And though they be often cast down, may they not be destroyed, and finally may they be saved.

Grant that every one in thy presence this morning who has cares, and sorrows, and bereavements, and distress of mind, and anxiety, may be able to draw near thee, and to lay their burdens and their troubles at thy feet. Speak kindly to those whose hearts are parched within them.

And we beseech of thee, O Lord our God, that thou wilt grant a sense of forgiveness to all those who have long lived the Christian life, and to those who, with doubtful warfare, are still pursuing it. Grant that all of them, this morning, may find nearness of access to thee, and have that peace which thou dost breathe upon thy disciples.

We rejoice, O Lord, that thou dost succor all; and we pray that all, this morning, may find a portion on their Father's table. And if we look forward and see our days shortening, and the number of them diminishing, may it bring no sorrow. May we rejoice to depart and be with Christ, which is better than life. And may there be a Christ for us—an anointed One—an Intercessor—a Forerunner—a counseling Friend—a very present Help in time of need. But let not the heaven be emptied, nor the earth be made desolate. May the light shine in the brightness of thy Father's love, that looks forth over all the world to succor it. By thy sorrow, O Lord Jesus, by thy suffering, by thy perfect obedience, by thy life, by thy death, and by thy life again, we plead for mercy upon ourselves, upon our children, upon all who are around about us, upon the whole Israel of God, and upon the whole human family.

Let the day of peace come. Let the day of war go past. Let the day of strifes and envyings set, never to rise again. Let that day come in which the sun shall stand a thousand years, shining brightly.

O Lord Jesus, make haste; for the whole earth doth wait for thee, groaning and travailing in pain until now. For thy promises are Yea and Amen. Thou hast set them forth. We believe that thou wilt yet come, and that this world shall become a world of righteousness, as it hath been desolated hitherto by transgression.

And now, we pray, that thou wilt prepare us for all the services of the sanctuary, and for all the enjoyments of this day. May it be a day of fruitful joy and gladness to us. May the little children rejoice in the Sunday as it comes around. May it be to them the brightest day of all the week. May parents rejoice. May all the members of the family feel that it is the Lord's day. And grant that all the other days of the week may point toward this. May there be around about this day such sweet associations; may all the truths of life and manhood and eternal life be so radiant on this day, that from year to year we shall feel that our Sundays are our castles of rest, our pavilions into which we run when the storm is out until it be overpassed. And at last, when we shall have finished our earthly career, bring us to that undiminished, undivided rest, the Sabbath of heaven. And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, shall be praises evermore. *Amen.*

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
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
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
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